

WILLIAM HILLBRANDT  
(Drafting Office and Office)

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

SUBJECT: Germany and Berlin

DATE: March 13, 1961

PARTICIPANTS: The Governing Mayor of Berlin, Mr. Willy Brandt  
Mr. Franz Krapf, Minister, German Embassy  
Dr. Swidbert Schnipperkötter, Counselor, German Embassy  
Mr. Foy D. Kohler, Assistant Secretary for European Affairs  
Mr. Martin J. Hillenbrand, GZR

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After a brief discussion of the proposed draft statement which Governing Mayor Brandt might make after his meeting with the President scheduled for later in the afternoon, Mr. Kohler noted that the Mayor's visit was a timely one. The Khrushchev letter and memorandum to Chancellor Adenauer of February 17, and the extensive letter and memorandum to Chancellor Adenauer of February 17, the 1961 Soviet campaign on Berlin. A timing dilemma seemed to have arisen. We had hoped that perhaps the Soviets might withhold active pressure on the subject until after the German elections, but their having set their own Party Congress for October hardly provided enough time. Perhaps Khrushchev had calculated that his memorandum would prod either the CDU or SPD leaders into making statements which he could exploit.

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Mr. Kohler said that Mayor Brandt was undoubtedly aware that the general approach of the President on Berlin did not involve any change in our firmness or determination. However, we were proceeding on the assumption that there was no point in our taking the initiative in raising the subject. If there was going to be a challenge on Berlin, it should come from Khrushchev. We can live with the status quo. Frankly, Mr. Kohler said, he was a little apprehensive because the Soviets were not saying more on the subject. He noted that, at the Secretary's recent press conference, there was considerable discussion of Berlin in response to a number of questions asked by correspondents. Mayor Brandt said he had recently made a statement in the Berlin Chamber of Deputies to the effect that the West Berliners should be happy if their city was not presently a hot issue and the center of conflict.

Mr. Kohler queried when will the general electoral campaign really begin. Mayor Brandt said that some thought it was already under way, but it would really get going in July-August. The date for the German elections would affect this. It had originally been fixed for September 17, but the fact that this was also the day on which the opening of the Bavarian October Festival was scheduled was causing difficulty.

Mr. Kohler asked what would happen if the Soviets called a peace conference, say in mid-August. Mayor Brandt said, in such an event, he would obviously have to leave the campaign. The SPD had made preparations for such an eventuality. Professor Carlo Schmidt would then take over direction of the campaign. One thing which might be done, although it had not been discussed as yet, would be issuance of a joint statement by the two major parties. Mr. Kohler said he did not personally rule out the possibility of such a move by the Soviets coming at a time when the German political campaign would complicate Western capacity to deal with the subject. Mr. Kohler mentioned that, in the recent conversation between Khrushchev and Ambassador Thompson in Siberia, the latter had been instructed not to raise the subject of Berlin. At the end of their discussion, however, Khrushchev noted that Germany and Berlin had not been mentioned. Thereupon he launched into pretty much the same line as contained in the February 17 memorandum. Ambassador Thompson merely noted his remarks and said he would report Khrushchev's views back to his Government.

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